

the philosophy by which she lived her life of "leaving it better than you found it."

Verna Viola Brown was born on September 18, 1923 in Keota, Oklahoma. Ms. Duty relocated to California and became a lifelong resident of Riverdale, California a small farming community in the San Joaquin Valley.

She was the wife of the late Mr. Joe Duty, a farm worker and she gained a deep appreciation and love for those who labored in the fields. Her pride and joy was being the mother of my dear friend Mayor Alan Autry of the City of Fresno. They shared a special bond and she was his biggest supporter as a mother, friend, confidante and hero. Her spiritual beliefs form an inspirational foundation of values for all who knew her.

Mrs. Duty is survived by her only child, Fresno Mayor Alan Autry and his wife Kimberlee of Fresno; her grandchildren Lauren, Heather and Austin; her brothers Tony, Gene, Alvin and Ronnie and sisters Gladys, Freda, Violet and Elaine.

Although the passing of Mrs. Verna Duty brings sadness to those whose lives she touched, her sincere and compassionate spirit and the ways in which she left this world a better place will never be forgotten.

HONORING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BAILEY'S CROSSROADS ROTARY CLUB

HON. TOM DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2007

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Bailey's Crossroads Rotary Club.

The Bailey's Crossroads Rotary Club was chartered on March 12, 1977, under the sponsorship of the Falls Church Rotary Club. The club was known as "The Early Birds" due to their 7:30 a.m. Friday meeting time at a Bob's Big Boy restaurant.

There were 27 members at the club's onset, which was prior to the approval of female membership. When Rotary International approved membership for women in 1989, the club led the way and was among the first to induct a woman into Rotary.

Bailey's Crossroads Rotary Club continues to maintain a focus on the Four Avenues of Service, both internationally and in the local community. The following activities are highlights of the club's service sponsorships: Interact Leadership Club at JEB Stuart High School; "Family Day"; delivery of Thanksgiving food baskets to the elderly during the holiday season; food and clothing drives to assist the needy; a Rotary Centennial construction project; and consistent support for matching grants projects.

Bailey's Crossroads Rotary Club has consistently been a leader in the number of members who are Paul Harris Fellows, having contributed \$1,000 or more to the Annual Programs Fund. The club has given a total of \$312,000 to the Rotary Foundation since 1977. The Bailey's club is known throughout Rotary District 7610 as the "Can Do Club" and has received numerous awards including Outstanding Club. I am proud to have served as 1 of the 29 past presidents, and commend

current president, Joseph W. Luquire, for his dynamic leadership and for the excellent reputation of the club.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I congratulate Bailey's Crossroads Rotary Club on its continued success and contributions to their community and Nation. On the occasion of their 30th anniversary, I ask my colleagues to join me in acknowledging this outstanding and distinguished organization.

IN HONOR OF SYNOVUS BEING NAMED ONE OF THE BEST COMPANIES IN AMERICA

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2007

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend a company that has made Columbus, GA, the Second Congressional District of Georgia and the United States proud. Synovus, a diversified financial services holding company based in Columbus, GA, recently was named by Forbes magazine to their Platinum 400 List of America's Best Big Companies.

To create the list, Forbes looked at more than 1,000 publicly traded companies with at least \$1 billion in revenue, and chose 400 based on metrics, earnings forecasts, corporate governance ratings, and other public company information. Of course, Forbes selected these companies not just for their financial performance, but also for their leadership, innovation, and execution.

The story of Synovus epitomizes the American spirit, exemplifying the kindness, innovation and enterprising character that has come to define this country. In the 1880s, a mill worker at Eagle and Phenix Mill in Columbus caught her dress in a piece of machinery. As her dress tore, her life savings, which she had sewn into her hem thinking it was the safest place for her money, spilled across the floor.

G. Gunby Jordan, the mill's secretary and treasurer, happened by and offered to keep her money in the mill safe and pay her monthly interest on the deposits. He soon offered the same service to all the mill workers, a system which years later, inspired Mr. Gunby to establish the institution that became Columbus Bank and Trust Company—Synovus' lead bank.

More than a century has passed since that torn dress, and like the act that founded Synovus, the company has continued to operate on the principles of integrity, character, treating people right and doing the right thing.

And it has served the company in good stead: Today, Synovus is one of the largest and strongest financial institutions in the Southeast, with 39 banks and \$31 billion in assets.

Indeed, I am proud to have this company in my district. Please join me in congratulating Synovus and its 14,000 employees on receiving this award.

NEW PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER URGED TO WORK FOR SIKH SOVEREIGNTY

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, recently elections were held in Punjab. The voters turned out the Congress Party government and restored the Shiromani Akali Dal to power. This means that Parkash Singh Badal returns as Chief Minister.

The Congress Party claims to be secular, but the fact is that it presided over the massacre of Sikhs that took the lives of over a quarter of a million Sikhs. It was the party that carried out the military attack on the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the center and seat of the Sikh religion. On the other hand, the Akali Dal has historically been the pro-Sikh party. However, during the tenure of Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, Punjab did reclaim its water rights and cancel the agreements that allowed diversion of that water to other states. The bill implementing the cancellation explicitly declared the sovereignty of Punjab.

As you know, Madam Speaker, Punjab, Khalistan declared its independence on October 7, 1987.

Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, has written to Chief Minister Badal urging him to keep his campaign promises of a better economic life for Punjab farmers, of clean government, and to reclaim the capital city of Chandigarh for Punjab. He also urged Mr. Badal to declare again the independence of Punjab, Khalistan and to work for a free and fair vote.

The essence of democracy is the right to self-determination. As such, a free and fair vote on the issue of independence is called for if India still wishes to be looked upon as the democracy it claims to be. The Indian government is sending out its sycophants to spin the Punjab elections as having "debunked" the Khalistan movement, but in fact, quite the opposite is the truth of the matter.

I call on this Congress to stand up for freedom and join in urging the Punjab Legislative Assembly to declare independence again, and to urge India to allow a free and fair plebiscite on the matter of independence for Khalistan, for the Christians of Nagaland, and for Kaslunir, as promised in 1948, as well as all others who seek their freedom. I also call for a stop to American aid and trade with India until basic human rights are respected and everyone there is allowed to live in freedom, dignity, prosperity, and security.

Madam Speaker, I would like to place the Council of Khalistan's letter to Chief Minister Badal into the RECORD at this time with the permission of the House.

COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN,

Washington, DC, February 28, 2007.

Hon. PARAKSH SINGH BADAL,
Chief Minister of Punjab, Chandigarh, Punjab,
India.

DEAR CHIEF MINISTER BADAL: Congratulations on your victory in the Punjab elections and your return as Chief Minister. You promised the return of clean government to Punjab. That would be a welcome relief for the people of Punjab. You also promised free electricity and Rs4 per kilo for wheat flour and Rs20 per kilo for lentils for the poor. We